



# Information Report

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO *faculty* ASSOCIATION

September 30, 2013

## **SJAC Information Report #3**

### **Introduction and Welcome**

With the rush of the first couple of weeks of the term hopefully subsiding, now is a good time to give some thought to the issues that the University of Toronto Faculty Association (UTFA) is engaged with. This information report offers a primer on ongoing issues, and invites you to seek more detail on our [website](#) or in dialog with your representatives on UTFA Council or the Executive. Most important, we want to hear *your* views.

Many challenges and opportunities face us. Evolving provincial government initiatives may have significant implications for the relationship between the province and Ontario's universities, as well as for the division of labour within and between those universities. Talk of "differentiation" (i.e., specialization of teaching and research missions) is on the rise, even as chronic government underfunding and rapid fee and tuition increases place greater strain on our students. Broader public sector pension reforms are rumoured that could mean significant changes to the structure, governance, and financing of our defined benefit pension plan.

At the same time, federal cuts in research funding, the elimination of important federal research initiatives and programs, and disquieting restrictions being placed on the freedom of federal scientists to speak publicly about their research all combine to place a chill on science. More broadly, a rapidly changing landscape of information and knowledge production and circulation includes new modes of electronic and online course delivery, open-access publishing protocols (and costs!), growth of private and corporate publishing, and evolving norms of copyright provision and protection.

Where, in all of this, does your faculty association come in? Is UTFA a resource in providing information and advice as well as advocacy on this wide array of issues? How can UTFA better meet your needs?

### **Advocating for Faculty and Librarians**

UTFA cannot address all of these issues on its own. For one thing, speaking officially for the University is a role reserved, appropriately, for the Governing Council and the Office of the President. Where we can, we provide the unique viewpoints of our membership, working in concert with the University Administration or communicating directly to the government and the wider public.

Moreover, UTFA is part of provincial and national coalitions of faculty associations working on matters of common interest. We are represented provincially through the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA) and nationally through the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT). The websites of both organizations are important resources on a range of issues. OCUFA, for instance, is very active in lobbying on the issue of differentiation and is closely monitoring the provincial pension reform agenda (see [ocufa.on.ca](http://ocufa.on.ca) for more information). CAUT is a vital resource and in the past year has launched a campaign called “Get Science Right” to draw attention to and contest the problematic practices and policies of the Harper government (see [www.caut.ca](http://www.caut.ca), [getsciencerright.ca](http://getsciencerright.ca) , and more below). Many of you have actively supported this campaign. We hope you will continue to do so.

However, UTFA does speak up directly. Over the course of the last year, we have provided feedback to the province on education policy.<sup>1</sup> We have also partnered for the current year with an exciting organization called *Scientists for the Right to Know* (<http://scientistsfortherighttoknow.wildapricot.org>) to help raise awareness of federal science policies and funding and program cuts. UTFA helped host a successful rally at Queen’s Park on September 18, attended by dozens of faculty and librarians from U of T, together with students and concerned members of the community.

In answering the question “what can UTFA do?” then, first and foremost, those of us elected to represent you through UTFA do the best we can to stay on top of issues important to you. And there is no doubt that UTFA is an important voice for faculty and librarians at this University. UTFA provides the *only* independent, democratically elected, collective form of representation solely devoted to faculty and librarian concerns. Thus, when speaking of university governance as well as advocacy within the University and beyond, UTFA is an important actual and potential resource for its approximately 3000 members. We welcome your involvement and input to help make us a better representative and agent on the issues important to you.

### **Institutional Capacities, Constraints and Renewal: Our Memorandum of Agreement**

It is also important to understand, however, that UTFA’s effectiveness is shaped and constrained by our institutional capacity to act on your behalf. And this capacity is currently under review via a process of renewal and modernization called the Special Joint Advisory Committee (SJAC).

Since the late 1970s, a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) between UTFA and the Governing Council has largely prescribed the role and capacity of the Association. The MoA was developed as an alternative to union certification for the faculty association. The MoA lays out the rights and responsibilities of the parties in relation to one another. Its core features include a formal collective bargaining process over minimum compensation and workload provisions, with a dispute resolution process entailing professional neutral mediation and arbitration to deal with matters over which the parties are unable to agree on their own. There is also a list of so-called frozen policies (largely academic policy matters such as tenure and promotion procedures), which cannot be changed without the mutual consent of UTFA and the

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, UTFA’s [October 2012 letter](#) to former MTCU Minister Glen Murray.

Governing Council, but which are not subject to any prescribed negotiating process. Other important policies shaping the conditions of our work as academics are excluded entirely from the scope of the MoA and are thus formally beyond UTFA's influence. The most important example in this latter category is a policy laying out collegial processes by which significant academic restructuring (e.g., program closure or merger) should unfold. There is no such policy now.

For several years, UTFA has pressed for reform of the MoA as a result of demand among U of T's faculty and librarians to secure a more meaningful role in establishing the conditions of our research, teaching, and professional activities. Support for change has for the most part been concentrated behind broadening the scope of issues dealt with through some form of rigorous and accountable process such as the collective bargaining mechanism described in the MoA.

The push for this change originates in the desire to make UTFA more effective, and the voices of those we represent more efficacious, on a wider range of issues. But it also originates in the desire to make UTFA and the Governing Council more responsive and accountable to one another and to you. In April of 2012, the Special Joint Advisory Committee process was established by mutual agreement. Its main purposes are: (i) to review and modernize the MoA; (ii) to examine the role of faculty and librarians in academic planning processes in particular; and (iii) via two subcommittees, to review and consider important changes to appointments policies for faculty.

The SJAC process is now well under way. While UTFA continues to advocate for making broader use of our collective bargaining process to deal with important non-monetary issues, including appointments matters, to date the representatives of the Governing Council have been highly resistant to this sort of change. The talks have been collegial but have progressed far too slowly. In the main committee, UTFA representatives have tabled a detailed proposal on the procedural aspects of academic restructuring and are awaiting a formal response from the Administration.

We are continuing with the negotiations on all three fronts, and have engaged the Honourable Mr. Frank Iacobucci to act as a facilitator. It is our goal on the UTFA side to begin meeting with Mr. Iacobucci no later than early February 2014 in order to work toward our April 1 2014 deadline.

The SJAC process, while supported by the main body of UTFA's membership, also represents something of a compromise between those who wish to see no change in the MoA, and those who wish to see the MoA abolished in favour of conventional union certification. UTFA's leadership is committed to making every effort to make the SJAC process work as a middle path, building on the "made at U of T" approach represented by the current MoA.

Obviously, the SJAC is a very important initiative and it is therefore vital that you acquaint yourself with the issues, if you have not already. You will find more detailed information, background, and issues to consider on our website in the area entitled "[Collegiality, Shared Governance and UTFA's Reform Campaign](#)". Please let us know what you think. Write to us at [bargaining@utfa.org](mailto:bargaining@utfa.org). If you and a group of your colleagues would like to discuss any matters pertinent to UTFA and University life for faculty and librarians in small (i.e., 5–15

people), informal groupings, please be in touch via [membership@utfa.org](mailto:membership@utfa.org) and we can set up a brown bag lunch. We can also provide someone from UTFA's leadership to speak to a regular department meeting at the request of you and your unit head. Just ask!

You will be hearing updates on the SJAC process in the coming months. There is also an important drop-in Q and A session scheduled for ***Wednesday October 9 from 5 to 7 pm in the Croft Chapter House of University College***. The first hour of this event will be devoted to issues specific to newly hired faculty and librarians, while the second hour will focus on the review and modernization of the MoA. The event will be a mix of short formal presentations and updates, together with informal discussion among colleagues. Please join us.

### **Thank You, Welcome and Congratulations**

UTFA extends a sincere thank you to outgoing Provost Cheryl Misak and President David Naylor, and a welcome and congratulations to incoming Provost Cheryl Regehr and President Meric Gertler. We have all benefitted from the tireless work and commitment of Professors Misak and Naylor. The legacies of their respective contributions will endure. UTFA's leadership genuinely looks forward to working productively with the new leadership at Simcoe Hall, as we together tackle the many challenges and embrace the many opportunities that lie ahead.

All the best for the rest of the term.

UTFA's Executive for the 2013–2014 academic year is:

Michael Attridge, Chair, Appointments Committee  
Ettore Damiano, Member-at-Large  
Paul Downes, Vice-President, Salary, Benefits and Pensions  
Paul Hamel, Member-at-Large  
Linda Kohn, Member-at-Large  
Brock MacDonald, Chair, Teaching Stream Committee  
Cynthia Messenger, Vice-President, Grievances  
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